

Let us not forget that educators all over the country are desperately looking for ways to push the envelope of schooling to reach disaffected learners, communicate with newcomers to this country, challenge brilliant kids, and prepare a future workforce. Pedantics alone are not the answer in the classroom, and they won't be effective in reaching an audience on television, either. We should seek a balance and an integration of education or informational content within the entertainment vehicle. This is a more difficult goal to achieve than separating the two. But with a process of review and collaboration, it can be attained, and program quality overall will be substantially enhanced. There are several notable examples in recent television history, Sesame Street being the most frequently cited, which the Commission could identify for illustrative purposes. It would be particularly useful to identify programs with educational content which have had commercial success.

Returning to the case of NBC, two of the selected shows (Bell and Dreams) are comedies with a complete storyline per episode. They lend themselves to demonstrating process as well as to dispensing facts. Before we began working on the series, I put forth a definition of educational and informational programming which would guide creative personnel in their work. The definition which is being applied to these three shows contains the following elements:

- **The show should define its audience.**

In this case the target audience is younger teens, ages

11-16. The target audience could be any age group or multiple age groups, but once defined, all the other attributes of the program apply to all the age groups defined as audience.

■ The content of the show should be developmentally appropriate for the audience which is defined.

A mystery on insurance fraud is completely inappropriate for young children, for example, who have no idea how insurance works or what fraud is. A story about the necessity of laws to preserve social order would be very effective for several age groups, depending upon the method of presentation.

■ The content should have intrinsic appeal and value to children in the targeted age group(s), and/or

■ The content should contain information which adults regard as important for children in the targeted age group(s) to know.

It is an axiom in education to introduce new concepts in a way that intersects with the child's own interests. The point here is to identify topics of importance to the target audience and develop content around these topics. The alternate approach is to consider topics adults regard as important for this age group to comprehend and internalize, like learning to manage multiple priorities, and develop that content as well.

■ The content may fall into several categories -- social, informational, emotional or intellectual -- but it must be integral to the plot and present throughout the script.

Wrap-arounds, tags, intermittent references to the educational

topic do not make for educational content. The plot must be the basis for introducing the educational content. The topics could be as wide ranging as how to prepare for college entrance exams, to resolving inter-personal conflicts, but the story must lead and sustain this content area.

■ The content should be handled in a way which is appropriate to the program format (drama, comedy, reality, documentary).

In Bell and Dreams, the content is developed over each half-hour of programming, and tends to demonstrate problem solving, decision-making, or a learning process. In contrast, Name Your Adventure, which is reality based, intersperses lots of facts, with questions and answers from the participant. Another format, interstitials, lends itself to dispensing facts, promoting simple behavioral practices, and adopting lifestyle slogans.

■ The content should avoid stereotypes of males, females, racial, religious or other significant groups.

Unfortunately, stereotypes create such fertile fodder for humor, creative personnel discount the severe and persistent negative images they sustain in the audience reaction. There are some techniques for managing stereotypic impressions on the audience, but the best approach is to not perpetuate them.

■ The content should be presented in a comprehensible, consistent manner.

■ The content should be accurate (when factual), and faithful to the character (when based on personalities).

Both these criteria can be construed by creative personnel as interfering with creative judgment about dialogue and characterization. However, if the presentation is one the audience is likely to perceive as inconceivable, incomprehensible, or implausible, the message will be lost.

■ The content should take the viewer from one level of knowledge to a more informed or higher level of knowledge by the end of the episode.

The heart of becoming educated about something is to have acquired new knowledge, or to have built upon existing knowledge. Although in mass communication, taking baseline measurements of audience knowledge is not feasible, there is still the potential to move the general content of an episode from one state of understanding to another. When the target audience is teens, in particular, reasoning, problem solving, and developing good judgment are essential preparatory skills for adulthood. Thus, increasing knowledge along a continuum is more important than dispensing facts.

There are several aspects of the above definition which differ from some of the language being proposed as model for a government specified definition of educational and informational programming. First is the issue of audience definition. Rather than requiring broadcasters to identify a specific age category, this definition permits broadcasters to direct programming to a multi-age audience with the understanding that multi-age programming is a decidedly more difficult undertaking. Multi-age programming must be designed

so that all ages will comprehend most of the content most of the time -- not that some of the ages might comprehend some of the material some of the time. Over forty years of research on human learning has made it quite clear that a five year old does not process information or comprehend content in the same way as a twelve year old. But without multi-age programming, we won't have "family" programming that a group of siblings could comfortably watch together.

Flexibility in format is another key difference between this definition and others being proposed. While there is no doubt that more programming minutes at regularly scheduled times are provided through "core" programming, excluding interstitials from a possible formula would be a mistake. For three years, NBC ran "One To Grow On," child focussed interstitials that aired like clockwork on Saturday mornings. They conveyed the kinds of messages or "rules for living" that could bear repetition, didn't require plot development, and took 60 seconds of air time during the periods children were very likely to be watching television. These interstitials won awards from Action for Children's Television, The Council for Better Broadcasting, and an EMMY. Furthermore, the network received letters from parents of young children who had learned some crucial principles of personal safety from the "drop-ins."

Finally, the definition being used at NBC emphasizes making the educational or informational content integral to the plot of the story rather than designating it as a separate message. The

essential challenge of education is to get children to recognize that what they learn really is relevant to living and functioning in the world as a competent individual. This attempt to render the informational content inseparable from the entertainment concretely illustrates the principle that learning enhances living.

THE PROCESS

Getting the definition of the programming clarified was just one step in the process. The more substantial and most important work is in translating the above definition into the substance of programming. The approach which is underway at NBC has six elements. They are described as follows:

■ REVIEW OF PROSPECTIVE PROGRAMMING

Once management had made the decision to qualify the entire schedule, I was asked to review tapes of the programming under consideration and meet with the creative staff of each show. The purpose was to determine if the show was conceptually or inherently amendable to conveying educational and informational content and if the creative staff was responsive to this mission.

■ ORIENTATION WITH CREATIVE TEAM

Once the schedule had been selected, network management had me meet with the creative teams to go over the intent of the Act and to discuss ways their shows could meet the educational and informational standard. The creative team, in turn, proposed a feedback loop for processing scripts and revisions so the actual review process could begin.

■ STORY CONFERENCES AND REVIEWS OF PROPOSED TREATMENTS

Each script emanated from an abbreviated treatment which was discussed thoroughly to determine if the plotline conveyed an educational or informational message, what were the most effective ways of conveying that message within the proposed story, what additional research might be needed to verify factual information or to obtain additional information, and to comment on the inherent attractiveness and appropriateness of the story for the target audience.

■ SCRIPT DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW

I provide written notes and verbal feedback on each draft of the script until it reaches a point of mutual satisfaction. This is, quite frankly, a process of compromise and debate, where communication is essential to understanding the needs of the creative team to execute a concept and my need to make a point.

■ REVIEW OF ROUGH CUTS

After the taping, I give a summary note on how well the final product ultimately reflects the educational intent of the episode.

■ ARTICULATION OF COMPANION MATERIALS

The companion materials for each episode provide a written articulation of the goal/or message and examples of how the message is illustrated in the story. The result of this process is to produce clarity and explicitness of the educational and information purposes within each episode of the series. These materials may also later be used as a basis for any study guides or other public information pieces the network may produce when the season is

inaugurated.

CONCLUSION

The network expectation from this process is that the content of both shows will have more depth and meaning for their target audience. Furthermore, the entertainment value will not be compromised by the expanded educational mission and the augmented production process adopted this season. What the network believes about this programming process is not that different from what children's television advocates intended. That is, the broadcast and creative community will be able to generate high quality, high content programming for the for the child audience. Moreover, the programming will have the production values essential to attracting an audience.

What the network knows from this recent experience -- which is probably overlooked by external groups -- are these four additional things. There is a challenging process of organizational change that must take place to produce qualifying programming. There are new or additional players at the creative table who are necessary collaborators for integrating educational content into commercial television for children. There is a learning curve to merging the educational and entertainment purposes effectively. There is the capacity and the will to do this within major segments of the broadcast and creative community without the restrictive government dictates that create a negative and resistant climate.

As a child development advocate and consultant to the network, I recognize that the process which I have just described is really

the outcome of consistent external pressure on the Congress to pass the Children's Television Act and on the FCC to oversee its implementation. Given the large number of broadcasters, and the wide diversity in markets, it seems less prudent to create inflexible rules which may have as the only major negative consequences closer scrutiny of the licensing application. The far stronger course would be to generate guidelines which reiterate the intent of the Act, which call for the broadcaster to define their process for meeting the intent of the Act, which instruct and illustrate several ways of meeting that intent, but which put the burden of proof on the broadcaster. There are no doubt broadcasters out there who are resistant, difficult, stubborn, and uninterested in fulfilling a children's agenda. But there are no doubt others who will engage the community of scholars and specialists in child development in a collaborative process to produce better, informational and educational television for children. We need find ways to stimulate and initiate that process rather than invent rules which serve to circumscribe communication and exchange.

KAREN HILL-SCOTT, Ed.d.

Dr. Karen Hill-Scott is a nationally recognized expert in child development and children's television programming. She is co-founder of Crystal Stairs, the largest private child development organization in California, Adjunct Professor of Planning at UCLA, and President of her own consulting firm.

Hill-Scott has been involved with children's and family television for the past ten years and has consulted on over 500 episodes of series television, afterschool programs, and family specials. Several of these series have won awards from Action for Children's Television, the Council for Better Broadcasting, and selected episodes have won the Humanitas Award. She also developed over 100 interstitial programming segments ("One to Grow On") for NBC which won an EMMY in 1987. As a member of the NBC Social Science Advisory Panel from 1984-1992, she reviewed all development proposals for children's programming submitted to the network.

In addition to network consulting, Hill-Scott has worked with independent production companies on development packages. She is currently senior educational advisor for The Puzzleworks, the first new Corporation for Public Broadcasting funded series for pre-school children funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting in 25 years. Hill-Scott is also a programming consultant for the new cable World Africa Network.

In the area of child development, Hill-Scott created an organization that serves over 12,000 California children and families in a variety of child care and child nutrition programs. She is a nationally recognized authority on prototype service delivery systems and child care supply and demand. Hill-Scott is involved in major policy developments regarding children in the United States and has been asked to appear as a witness for several Congressional hearings on child care, welfare reform, and child nutrition legislation.

Over the past 20 years, Hill-Scott has written and lectured extensively about child development issues. She works with private corporations and organizations in designing work-family programs and her current client roster is diverse, including TRW Space & Defense as well as Kaufman & Broad, the largest California homebuilder. For public service, Hill-Scott has served on or chaired several national, state, and local commissions and boards. Currently, in addition to her participation on the Board of Rebuild LA and the Los Angeles Child Care Advisory Board, Hill-Scott is Chair of the Economic Justice Initiative Project of the Los Angeles Women's Foundation.

Dr. Hill-Scott received her B.A. in Music from Pepperdine University and her doctorate in Learning and Development from UCLA where she has been on the faculty since 1972. She is married with four children and resides in Los Angeles.

SAVED BY THE BELL - 10/1/94 - 9/30/95

"DRINKING 101"

All forms of alcoholic beverages, including beer, can produce intoxication which in turn puts you at great risk for serious accidents, and even death. If at all possible, don't drink and if you do drink, never drive a vehicle while under the influence.

"TO CHEAT OR NOT TO CHEAT"

Cheating misrepresents your knowledge, denies others a fair chance at doing well, and is a form of dishonesty that ultimately doesn't benefit anyone, and promotes unfairness toward others.

"THE 'D' STANDS FOR DROPOUT"

Without a high school diploma, a young person will not have the basic requirements for access to higher education and/or job mobility.

"SQUASH IT"

Violence is not a solution to bullying or intimidation. One way of countering a bully is to demonstrate you are unafraid, but choose not to be violent as a means of keeping the peace.

"LET THE GAMES BEGIN"

Don't compromise yourself and your high standards in order to achieve a short term gain. Always do what is ethical and correct.

"A PERFECT LINDSAY"

Compulsive and obsessive attention to weight control is a sign of an emerging eating disorder. You should assist a friend in getting help from parents, counselors, or other professionals if you suspect she is anorexic, bulimic or struggling with serious emotional difficulties.

"BACK AT THE RANCH"

If you believe in yourself, you can overcome the inadequacies other perceive in you and demonstrate your inner strengths.

"THE RETURN OF SCREECH"

Deceits multiply upon themselves, creating complex problems that could hurt others. Telling the truth and bearing the consequences is the better path to take.

“WANNA BET?”

Don't take unnecessary risks with your hard-earned money. Once it's lost to chance, it's not likely to be retrieved.

“BELDING'S PRANK”

Pay attention and respond to adult authority with respect and thoughtfulness. Don't let your need to do your own thing lead you to behave in a way that would negatively impact others who help and support you.

“TOMMY THE TENOR”

Don't ever hide or suppress a special talent because you're afraid of what other people will say about you. Talents are gifts meant to be shared.

“BREAKING UP”

Ending a relationship does not have to be volatile, rancorous or conflict ridden. An effective approach toward dissolution is to face reality and move on with your life without hating or having anger toward another person.

“ALL PLAY AND NO WORK”

When you have a job, your first responsibility is to do your work. When you don't perform, you not only compromise your chances for employment, you negatively affect the work performance of others who work with you or who supervise you.

“WELCOME TO BAYSIDE”

Prejudiced behavior limits opportunities to establish lasting friendships and relationships that are productive, rewarding and enjoyable.

“AIR SCREECH”

There are no shortcuts to establishing a successful business. If you try to work around rules and laws, you are likely to end up with lots of trouble and very little money.

“DRIVING SCHOOL”

Inadequate preparation leads to inadequate performance which can produce problems later on, especially when it comes to driving.

CALIFORNIA DREAMS - 10/1/94 - 9/30/95

"BOYZ 'R US"

Violent retribution never solves a problem. It only quells a conflict on a temporary basis and ultimately leads to the kind of escalation which results in severe injury or death to others.

"BLIND DATES"

It is unreasonable and unfair to show prejudice toward a person with a disability and not permit a friendship or relationship to develop because of these prejudices.

"FOLLOW YOUR DREAMS"

Aptitude tests should not dictate your future but serve as a guide for you to explore opportunities. If you have a strong interest in something that provides success, experiences and reinforcement, you should pursue and develop that interest.

"HARLEY AND THE MARLBORO MAN"

Smoking is really an addictive and debilitating habit, that can take away both the image you sought to attain, as well as your life.

"TIFFANI'S GOLD"

Illicit drug use can easily escalate into chronic dependence which has many damaging side effects. It is important to pay attention to changes in your friends' behavior and see to it that they find help and support for discontinuing drug usage if that is the underlying source of their problems.

"THE TREASURE OF PCH"

Greed can ruin friendships, and it takes great trust and openness to manage money among friendships, and it takes great trust and openness to manage money among friends and maintain the friendship too.

"BLOOD MONEY"

Giving blood is an important service to humanity which requires very little time, effort or sacrifice on the part of the donor, yet could save the life of someone with a critical illness or need.

"DADDY'S GIRL"

It is normal to feel some resentment about a parent's dating relationships; but a single parent needs a social life separate from the child's.

“JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENTS”

Developing and managing a business requires both a good product and a good business plan for managing that product's distribution and sales in the marketplace. If you don't exercise good management of the business, you will find it very hard to actually make any money.

“FAMILY TREE”

Imperfections exist even in the most idealized family history. We should understand the past for whatever it represents, not be burdened by the unpleasant or difficult aspects, but use your understanding to manage and plan for the future.

“THE LONG GOODBYE”

When you've been hurt by someone you love, it is far better to talk about your feelings and try to resolve the problem rather than retreat from communication and try to return the hurt.

“THE PRINCESS AND THE YETI”

If you always act in self-interest, you will alienate and jeopardize friendships as well as lose the opportunity to be truly helpful when someone else is in need.

“PRINCIPAL TIFFANI”

The art of leadership is more than just setting rules and insisting that people follow. It requires recognizing the problem and developing the best approach to getting a desired result.

HANG TIME - 9/9/95 (PREMIERE) - 9/30/95

PILOT

When gender is used as an excuse to pre-judge the ability or worth of another, one party is deprived the opportunity to demonstrate their true abilities, and the other party is deprived of the opportunity to experience and benefit from those abilities.

“TROUBLE IN PARADISE”

Good communication is the best way to get the facts and avoid drawing negative conclusions about others' behavior.

“FULL COURT PRESS”

External praise is often difficult for the recipient of the attention. Further, it can lead to resentment among those who feel their efforts are being ignored. When these situations occur, it is imperative that the participants come together on a plan that reflects good sportsmanship and fosters an equitable distribution of recognition.

Majerle, examine how an education opens doors, creates options and provides opportunities. Also presented, through video clips, are service learning programs in which students learn by providing a service to their communities, and peer mediation programs in which student mediators help classmates resolve conflicts. It is indicated that the celebration is part of a multi-faceted Stay in School program which includes player visits to schools. Celebration hosts are Greg Lee and Inside Stuff hosts Ahmad Rashad and Willow Bay.

STAY IN SCHOOL

Selected for their attitude, attendance and achievement, 16,000 Phoenix students participate in the NBA All-Star Stay in School Celebration where they hear celebrities and NBA spokespeople emphasize the importance of education.

OVERCOMING A DISABILITY

Born with a badly damaged arm, Doug Dormu has nevertheless achieved recognition as a top high school basketball player by working extra hard to hone his skills.

BREAKING RACIAL BARRIERS

In 1950, Earl Lloyd was the first African American to play in an NBA game and thus broke the color barrier. He recalls and interprets the circumstances surrounding this event.

NEW RESPONSIBILITIES

Having established an educational foundation, player David Robinson explains how he has taken on a role of leadership and greater responsibility for his team. Shown with his son, he discusses the importance of family.

TRADITION OF MENTORING

Player Joe Dumars, who models his game after Julius Erving's, serves as a mentor to rookie Grant Hill. Dumars gives a tour of his Detroit sports center, designed as a community facility for children and adults.

PREVENTING YOUTH VIOLENCE

NBA players educate teens about the dangers of hand guns. Through discussions and reference to personal experience they help teenagers see alternatives.

CHILD ABUSE AWARENESS

After reading a letter from an abused child, player Karl Malone explains that one way to deter child abuse is for parents to build solid values and skills.

HELPING KIDS WITH MATH

Minnesota Timberwolves players involved in the Athletes Committed to Education program give back to the community by tutoring kids in math. They discuss the importance of staying in school and working hard.

BUILDING AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The Charlotte Hornets work with the Federal National Mortgage Association (FANNIE MAE) which sponsors a program to build housing and support home ownership. Players and future residents sometimes work side by side.

READING IS FUNDAMENTAL

Shaquille O'Neal explains why reading is fundamental. He describes how reading opens the new worlds of information, is enjoyable, and is absolutely essential in getting a job.

A HEROIC GRADUATE

Fulfilling a promise to his grandmother, player Juwan Howard completed his college education while playing for the NBA. Seen graduating, Howard discusses the endurance of an education, his commitment to being a positive role model and future plans for continuing and using his education.

VISITING THE HEARD MUSEUM

Player Kevin Johnson gives a tour of the Heard Museum of Native American Art. He explores and explains some of the art and artifacts of the Indians of the Southwest.

INSPIRED BY A PLAYER

A school girl in Utah was inspired to overcome learning difficulties after viewing a video in which Patrick Ewing describes the challenges he faced adjusting to school in the U.S.

GRANT HILL VISITS A SCHOOL

When Grant Hill visits the 8th grade class of a contestant winner, he discusses the importance of education and his plans to become a teacher or lawyer.

FAST BUT SAFE

By taking special courses in race car driving, player Sean Elliot discovered that safety was essential. His lessons made him more aware of safety in his everyday driving.

CREATIVE ARTS WORKSHOP ADVENTURE

Player Charles Oakley hosted a visit to Great Adventure amusement park for a group of kids from the Creative Arts Workshop which teaches art, survival skills and cooperation to inner city children.

WALT BUILDS VOCABULARY

To expand fans' vocabularies and intrigue listeners, Walt Frazier uses expressive, descriptive words such as "riveting", "mesmerizing" and "tenacious" when he broadcasts Knicks games.

UNSELD SCHOOL

Wes Unseld and his wife have created a private elementary school where children learn music, are exposed to different cultures, and get a solid academic foundation.

TRIBE COMPETITION

When Native American tribes convene to play basketball they use the opportunity to discuss how to improve the lives of their young people.

NBA INSIDE STUFF - 1/1/95 - 9/30/95

Airdate: 1/7/95

Time: 12:00 - 12:30PM

GUANTANAMO BAY

Players distribute holiday gifts to Cuban and Haitian refugee children, visit American troops and gain a new perspective on some of the difficulties of life, as they bring hope to those they meet.

PREPARING FOR A ROLE

By carefully observing referees at work, actor Billy Crystal is able to capture a sense of authenticity in playing a basketball referee in an upcoming film.

A ROUTE TO SUCCESS

Player Dan Majerle attributes some of his success to staying flexible -- both physically and in his willingness to play whatever role is necessary on the court.

OVERCOMING BARRIERS

Coach Lenny Wilkins had to overcome racial barriers to become the first African-American basketball coach in the NBA. About to break a record for coaching victories, he stresses the importance of judging a person by the content of his character.

MOSCOW CIRCUS

Players Grant Hill and Oliver Miller discover what occurs backstage as the Moscow Circus prepares for a performance.

ENCYCLOPEDIA

A reference guide which provides an historical perspective, as well as facts and figures about the game, the *Official NBA Basketball Encyclopedia* is examined and described by the legendary Julius Erving.

Airdate: 1/14/95

Time: 12:00 - 12:30PM

HONORING MARTIN LUTHER KING

Several NBA players examine how Martin Luther King influenced their lives. They speak of being inspired by his courage to speak out and his messages of racial equality and tolerance.